

Spiritual State of the World's Children

Colombia





Spiritual State of the World's Children A Quantitative Study

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR MINISTRY

Colombia

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ONEHOPE

OneHope is a non-profit organization with a mission to *affect destiny by providing God's eternal Word to all the children and youth of the world.* With programs in over 125 nations OneHope has reached over 500 million children and young people with a special presentation of the life of Jesus. Committed to presenting God's Word in a format that is relevant and dynamic, research is a critical step in the development of country and age specific products and programs.



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Section I: Key Issues Analysis

Key Issues

Family

- 68% indicated that their parents frequently provide a good example to them.
- 78% believed that a family is all the people that you love and you care about; and 16% feels that a family is all the people related to you by birth, adoption or marriage.
- 71% spend less than 15 minutes talking to their fathers about things that interest them.
- 42% spend less than 15 minutes talking to their mothers about things that interest them.
- 61% feel frequently proud of their fathers.
- 79% feels frequently proud of their mothers.
- 42% say that adults frequently spend time with them.
- 73% feel that their family experience has been positive, but just 46% would like to have a marriage like their parents.
- 90% believe that God’s purpose is for marriage to last a lifetime; yet 53% believe that there exists too much pressure on marriage, and as such would prefer to live together with someone. 62% indicate that it is important to have a spouse for life.

Morals

- 20% of youth younger than 16 and 33% older than 16 report having had sexual intercourse.
- 57% believe that two persons who are in love, yet unmarried, should sometimes or always have sexual intercourse.
- 52% indicate that they would be somewhat or very likely to have sexual intercourse if they were in love, and 43% say that they would be somewhat or very likely to have sexual intercourse if they were sure it would not result in pregnancy.
- 46% report that they have learned some or a lot about sexuality from textbooks, and 27% from their parents. 81% believe that it is necessary at times to lie a bit.
- 75% indicate having lied to one or both parents, teachers or other adults in the past 3 months.
- 24% have had suicidal thoughts, and 16% have attempted to commit suicide in the past 3 months.
- 26% spend more than 8 hours watching TV, and 27% spends more than 8 hours listening to music.
- 70% indicate that it is OK to break the law, as long as it doesn’t hurt anyone; and 77% report that something is ethical or moral when it works for their life, since 78% believe that truth has different ethical and moral meanings for different people.

Religious Attitudes

- 90% report that the Bible offers people practical advice for life and 86% believe that Jesus was a real person and that the forgiveness of sins is only possible through Jesus Christ. 82% agree that God exists.
- 84% indicate that their faith is very important in their lives, and 66% think that it is very important to have a close relationship with God.
- Less than 25% attend youth groups, and less than 20% read the Scriptures monthly, weekly or daily.
- 26% claim that the Bible has great influence in their thoughts; 28% indicates that the Christian faith has great influence on their thoughts; 27% consider that it is very important to participate in the activities of a church, and only 10% report that religious leaders have great influence on their thoughts.

Strengths & Opportunities

- Family is valued, and the parents have influence in the lives of their children.
- Spirituality is important, as are respect and acknowledgement of biblical principles of truth.
- Young people are willing to accept adults in the family as role models.
- Aspirations and optimism about their future.

Weaknesses & Threats

- Disintegration of family structure leaves the youth without moral formation.
- Lack of interest in the church and its programs; they are not involved in it/non-biblical worldview.
- Relationships with the opposite sex are defined by early sexual activity and their concept of affection.
- The use of their spare time is not edifying. Its content can be harmful for their moral formation.
- Their moral criteria are circumstantial, and defined according to their personal benefit; their beliefs and their moral behaviors do not match.

Recommendations

To reinforce the family structure to promote a healthy family

- To generate tools that serve as a bridge between parents and children, and motivate a positive family interaction.
- To motivate families through the media to spend more time with their youth.

Moral Development

- To integrate education of values amongst family, school and church, in a joint effort for the moral development of the youth.
- Formation of values through moral dilemmas, where they can decide how to respond to difficult circumstances.
- To re-educate the educators to turn them into active moral instructors, equipping them with effective training and materials.

A biblical understanding of the value of life

- To develop programs that emphasize the rescuing of the sacred concept of life, instead of measuring the value of life based on the ability to produce and consume.
- To clearly define biblical values as well as a biblical worldview, so that the church will use terms and meanings common to the development of holistic strategies.
- To develop a holistic strategy that presents the life and teachings of Jesus as an effective role model for young people.

To connect Bible themes with secular themes

- To rediscover the integrity of the Great Commission, and present it to all spheres of society.
- To deal with national and local themes, reflecting the Bible's relevant responses to them.

Section II: Project Description

Acknowledgments

This project was made possible in part by funding from the Maclellan Foundation and Global Ministries - OneHope.

We acknowledge the cooperation of the Colombia Ministry of Education, schools included in the sample, the headmasters, and the cooperation of students included in the sample.

The following organizations contributed to the developing of the key points included in this report: Colombian Evangelical Council (CEDECOL), Fundación Universitaria Seminario Bíblico de Colombia, World Vision Colombia, Ministerio Palabritas, Red Asvidas, Centro de Formación de Líderes (CENFOL), CRISALINCO, Tabernáculo de la Fe, Iglesia Cristiana Refugio de Fe, Youth With A Mission (JUCUM), Christ For The City and OneHope Colombia.

The instrument administered in this study was made available by Josh McDowell Ministries.

Overview

OneHope seeks to understand what children and youth deal with in their day-to-day realities. We know that children and youth face a variety of social challenges and experience psycho-social needs to which they are often left without effective responses. We do know that the needs of children vary from country to country and even regionally within countries. However, without reliable information we are unable to tailor our products and distribution programs to address needs specific to particular contexts.

While the issues and challenges facing children and youth in developed countries are researched and documented, those in developing countries are not. Without an accurate analysis of their contexts these populations are treated as though they share a common reality. An awareness of the immediate reality of children is often discovered only after ministry has begun and resources have been committed to a project.

The Spiritual State of the World's Children project will capture the following information about children in Colombia:

- Typical family situations, relationships and parental contact
- Behaviors and moral values guiding relationships with peers of the opposite sex
- Daily occupations and pastimes
- Worldviews, influences, beliefs, future goals and religious affiliation
- Theological perspectives and commitment

Research Methodology

The Attitude and Behaviors of Youth survey is a stratified random survey of secondary school children. The survey was stratified by degree of urbanization and gender for Colombia. Additional strata that permit additional analysis are: economic status, family composition, ethnicity and religious affiliation.

The core survey is constructed using the Survey of Juveniles designed by Chris Sleath of Josh McDowell Ministries. The survey was administered in secondary schools (with the instruction in Spanish), the language of instruction and will be supplemented by focus groups if warranted. Surveys were administered in randomly

selected schools segregated by population density (proportional to national population distribution of urban-rural residents) to students in the schools randomized by gender (proportional to the national ratio of male-female).

Project Overview

The data was collected September through November of 2007. The local coordinator for the research conducted in Colombia was Wilson Gomez. Oversight was provided by Farid Moreno and Dr. Allen Reesor of Pompano Beach, Florida. The research followed the project design instructions (see below under Logistics).

Data was entered into a web-based database. The data base was hosted by Philip Issa of Elite Survey and assessed by Dr. Rene Paulson, Ph.D. The final report employs Dr. Paulson's analysis of the data and is supplemented with secondary data drawn from research projects and primary qualitative data.

The final report will be made available to ministry partners who promote ministry to children and youth through collaborative research.

Logistics

Review

National leaders reviewed the survey and recommended only minor changes.

Randomization

Reliability of the survey results depends upon consistent randomization of the participants. Two strata of randomization that govern participant selection are gender and population density distributions.

Colombia's Ministry of Education provided a list of schools segregated by population density.

Population density was interpreted as urban/rural; this in turn was determined to fall into the two categories of population density of less than one hundred thousand and between one hundred thousand and one million. This list was used to select randomly identified schools at OneHope Headquarters. The list of randomized schools was returned to the local Research Coordinator to evaluate the potential for access. Schools that were inaccessible were replaced by following randomization procedures.

Randomization by gender was done when students were selected for participation, to ensure that gender participation reflects the male/female ratio of the national population.

Verifying Access

Research Assistants met with the administration of each school to explain the survey and obtain commitment for participation.

Survey Printing

A master copy of the survey response form was forwarded electronically to the local Research Coordinator who received bids for the printing of 5,000 collated and stapled copies.

Quality Control

Hard copies of the survey response form were randomly assessed to evaluate survey validity. Hard copy survey response forms will be retained by the local OneHope office in Colombia for one year to provide the opportunity of verifying the accuracy of data entry and as a back up to electronic data files. The surveys must be kept confidential and will be turned over to a designated BOH Headquarters representative on or about 12 months following the survey. This person will oversee the shredding of the hard copy surveys after 12 months.

Implementation & Survey Administration

Data Collection

The survey was administered in the schools identified by randomization and previously contacted. The research agent will identify the number of classes in session on the day of the survey.

- If the class size averaged less than 30 students, 15 classes were randomly selected, and 15 students from each class were randomly selected proportional to the male/female ratio statistically representative of the national demographic.
- If the class size averaged greater than 30 students, 10 classes were randomly selected, and 22 students from each class were randomly selected proportional to the male/female ratio statistically representative of the national demographic.

Students were asked to voluntarily participate. Those willing to participate in the survey were segregated by gender, and randomly selected proportional to the male/female ratio statistically representative of the national demographic. Participants were administered the survey in groups that could be accommodated in a classroom. A sample set of at least 200 students were collected in each school.

Surveys were conducted by two people. A brief scripted introduction was read. The students were given the opportunity to ask questions. The survey was read aloud, with each question being read alternately by one of two surveyors.

Data Entry

Adriana Ruiz and Wilson Gomez were responsible for accurate input of the data into the web-based survey interface.

Section III: Profile of Youth in Country

Data Qualifications

The sample set does not have enough older students, ages 16-18, to be fully valid particularly in rural areas.

This report also includes the comparison of “evangelical” and “non-evangelical” populations. This category is defined by the response offered in Q32. Respondents are considered evangelicals if they indicate “when you die you will go to Heaven because you have confessed your sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as your savior.” The evangelical population includes 51% Catholics, 31% Protestants, and 5% Jehovah’s Witnesses. Non-evangelicals include 70% Catholics, 10% Jehovah’s Witnesses, and 8% Protestants.

Demographic Profile

The survey overall is slightly weighted to the female population; this is even more pronounced in the older age group of 16 plus years. Nearly 75% of the surveys were completed by students under the age of 16.

Overall students consider themselves most likely to be doing “good” in school. The rural and evangelical groups are slightly more likely to evaluate their performance as “excellent” when compared to their equivalent peers. The most frequently chosen category of fathers’ profession is “other,” which may include self employed or unemployed parents. The next most likely categories are “industrial” followed by “service industry,” and “agriculture”. When analyzed by population density, urban fathers are more likely to be “other” employed or “industrial” than the lower population densities. Overall mothers are most likely to be “other” employed, which may indicate that they stay at home, are self employed, or unemployed. Mothers are most likely to be employed in the “service industry” followed by “industrial” and “professional.”

About 40% of those responding indicated that their parents are married. A total of over 40% also responded that their parents are divorced, divorced and remarried, or “other.” Across all categories slightly more than 10% indicate that one or both parents have died. When analyzed by population density, urban respondents are more likely to indicate that their parents are not married or that their parents are divorced.

Over 65% indicate that they live with two parents. Twenty five percent indicate that they live with one parent or a grandmother. The evangelical population is 10% less likely to live with their natural parents and 5% more likely to live with “one natural parent and step parent” than their non-evangelical counterparts.

Family Relationships

Nearly 40% of those surveyed have a very close relationship with their fathers. An additional 25% have a fairly close relationship. About 10% of the youth either do not know him or report he is not alive. Over half of the respondents are proud of their fathers and feel their fathers demonstrate love for them. However, fewer than 20% seek advice or talk to their fathers about personal issues. Including those whose fathers have died, 31% indicate that they spend no time talking to their fathers. Overall those who spend more than “no time” but less than 15 minutes are 40%.

86% indicate that they are fairly or very close to their mothers. 79% of the students feel proud of their mothers and 59% show love to their mothers with 67% feeling their mothers show love to them. 70% report spending no time talking to their mother, although 2% report that their mother is either dead or they do not know her. 1/3

spend no more than 15 minutes talking to their mothers about important things in their lives, this is 13% more likely to be the case for male respondents. An additional 1/3 of those responding spend up to an hour in conversation with them. A remaining 25% of the youth spend an hour or more talking to their mothers; females are more likely to engage in longer conversations.

The youth responding have positive interactive experiences with the adults in their families and most frequently indicate that adults set good examples for them, are interested in who they are and demonstrate love among themselves, but also expect more than is fair. When evaluated by evangelical/non-evangelical populations it seems that the evangelical group reports that adults are more likely to admit when they are wrong and demonstrate love for one another.

Over 50% of the respondents indicate living in a home where they feel safe and loved. 14% of the youth feel uncomfortable at home and would rather be elsewhere. Females and evangelicals are more likely to be certain about feeling loved and safe at home.

Nearly 80% identify a family as those who are affiliated by love or care rather than relationship of birth or marriage (16%). If children are involved in a family group, the group is generally considered to be a family whether or not the parents are married and also in the case of a single unmarried woman with children. About 20% consider an unmarried couples without children and 10% in the case of a homosexual couples living together to be a family.

When asked to consider their own expectations of marriage, 90% of the youth agree that God intends marriage to last a lifetime. Approximately 75% think they will be happy in their marriage and feel positive about their family experience. However, the same percentage (75%) thinks it is very hard to have a successful marriage now-a-days. Their opinion is almost equally divided in issues concerning divorce when there are children involved in a marriage, to want a marriage like their parents, to want to be a virgin at marriage, or to live with someone instead of getting married.

When analyzed by population density, the rural and semi-urban groups are generally more positive about marriage than their urban counterparts. They feel that the family provides social stability; they would like to be virgin at marriage, they would be happy in their marriage, and are more likely to want a marriage like their parents.

When analyzed by evangelical/non-evangelical, the evangelical group is more likely to oppose divorce, report a positive family experience, believe God intends marriage to last a lifetime and to expect to have happy marriages themselves. Non-evangelical populations indicate there is too much pressure to get married and prefer to remain single or live with someone.

Relationships with People of the Opposite Sex

Overall, 26% indicate that they have had sexual intercourse, males are 14% more likely than females and older students are 12% more likely than younger students to respond that this is the case. The overall may inaccurately portray the entire population since our data set is predominately made up of 13-15 year olds. The frequency of positive response to sexual activity decreases with increased intensity of the activity. Urban respondents are more likely in all categories to be sexually active than their rural and semi-urban counterparts, although the older representation in this study is almost exclusively from urban populations. While non-evangelicals are more likely to report having fondled breasts and genitals there is no statistically significant difference between evangelicals and non-evangelicals in regards to sexual intercourse.

Fifty-seven percent indicate that it is sometimes or always acceptable for sexual intercourse to occur between unmarried couples who are in love with each other. The rate of approval decreases as the intensity of a sexual activity increases. Males are more likely to approve of intense sexual activity than females. Rural and evangelical respondents tend to approve of intense sexual activities more frequently for couples in love than are their non-evangelical and urban counterparts.

Overall, respondents indicate that being in love with a person is the most valid justification for engaging in sexual intercourse. They are more reluctant to experiment sexually if pregnancy would result or if parents would find out. Youth indicate having learned about sex primarily from textbooks. Television, movies, and friends are equally reported as the next source of information about sex.

Beliefs and Perspectives on Daily Life

Respondents indicate that parents are most influential in their lives, followed closely by their friends. Following in descending order of influence is music they listen to, siblings, teachers, and Christian faith/ Bible/TV. Movies, textbooks, the internet, and religious leaders/New Age religion follow. The categories that are least influential are other religions and political leaders.

Over half of the youth report being very satisfied with life these days; an additional 28% indicate being somewhat satisfied. However, when asked to reflect on their activities over the past three months, 75% of respondents indicated having lied to an adult and 70% having lied to a friend or peer. Other issues reported less frequently include cheating on an exam 57%, gambling or betting money 35%, and drinking alcohol to the point of intoxication 30%. About one-quarter report having read or watched pornography and 24% percent report having suicidal thoughts with 16% having attempted suicide.

Females are more likely to have had suicidal thoughts; males are far more likely to engage in pornographic activities, gambling, to steal and hurt someone physically and are slightly more likely to get drunk and smoke cigarettes.

When analyzed by population density, rural respondents are more likely to cheat on an exam than urban respondents, semi-urban students are slightly more likely to lie to an adult than rural and urban students, and urban youth are more likely to get drunk and gamble than are rural and semi-urban youth populations. Evangelicals are more likely to lie to a friend or peer and to cheat on an exam than their non-evangelical counterparts. Non-evangelicals are more likely to have suicidal thoughts and slightly more likely to steal and lie to an adult.

The most likely way to spend free time is to sleep when there is time, followed by watching TV, and listening to music. Chatting on the internet or SMS with friends follows and is more frequent than studying, reading a book, or reading the Bible. Females and urban respondents are more likely to report listening to music than other populations.

The products most preferred by youth are MP3, cell phones, and laptops. Hip Hop music and its lifestyle were next along with blogging or chatting on the internet. Urban youth are more likely to enjoy blogging or chatting than rural youth. However, laptop computers were equally rated among the most preferred products in all population density sub-sets.

With regard to priorities for their future lives, they are most concerned about issues of health, friendship, and education. Others ranking as slightly less important are having material possessions and a clear purpose in life. Living with a high degree of integrity, having a close relationship with God, being close to family and relatives,

and having a fulfilled sex life in marriage are also significant conditions indicated by students. Least regarded conditions in their future include being active in a church, influencing others, and having children. Urban respondents are less likely to feel family values are important than rural and semi-urban respondents, indicated by less desire to have children, close relationships with family, and one marriage partner for life. Evangelicals are more likely to desire good health, being active in a church, having a close relationship with God, and having one marriage partner for life than their non-evangelical peers. Fame and sexual fulfillment are slightly more important to non-evangelicals.

Religious Background and Practice

78% of the youth responding are Christian – 13% are “Protestant” and 65% are “Catholic.” 12% report being affiliated to minority religious groups such as Jehovah’s Witnesses at 9% and Mormons at 3%. 50% of the youth indicate that their religious faith is very important in their lives. Another 29% indicate it is somewhat important.

Overall, the majority of the respondents seem to hold a Biblical worldview; 90% indicate the Bible provides today’s people with practical standards for living and 84% agree about their faith being important in their lives. Approximately 80% think the Bible provides a clear and indisputable description of moral truth that is the same for all people in all situations. 82% of youth indicate that they accept the existence of God and 81% that the universe was originally created by God. 72% of those responding describe their view of God as omnipotent and omniscient. However, 25% of the respondents do not have a traditional Christian view of God with 22% holding New Age perceptions of God.

Regarding their view of life after death, the most frequently selected response is that they do not know what will happen to them after they die at 28%. 23% indicate that confession of sins and acceptance of Christ is necessary to enter heaven. Another 15% think they will go to heaven for being “a good person” and 14% believe that following religious rituals will get them to heaven.

However, at a personal level students are pragmatic; they think it is necessary to lie and bend the rules to their own benefit at 80%. They agree that it is okay to break the law without hurting anybody at 70%, that truth can be contradictorily defined and still be correct at 78%, and that moral and ethical issues are subjective at 77%; a similar percentage disagree that anyone who relies upon the Bible for moral guidance is foolish. Nearly 40% indicate that all religions teach equally valid truths, and 35% do not think it is important to be a member of a church.

61% believe heaven and hell are real places and an additional 26% believe they probably exist. Believing in ghosts and their influence on life is rejected by 27% and thought possible by over half of the respondents. 24% believe souls do not die with the body and 51% that souls die with the body. Approximately half of those responding do not believe there is value in horoscopes/fortune-telling and other popular religious practices; only 15% highly believe these practices have value. Females are more likely to believe in God, heaven and hell, and horoscope/fortune-telling than males.

Rural respondents are slightly more likely to hold a Biblical worldview and urban youth are typically more secular in their worldview. The rural respondents were more likely to believe it is important to be a member of a church than urban respondents. Conversely, they are more likely to define truth in contradictory ways and to agree that bending the rules to their own benefit and breaking the law without hurting anyone are acceptable moral values. Urban respondents are slightly more likely to believe in living a satisfying life without having to pursue spiritual development, that God created humans but He is no longer personally involved in their lives, to reject popular practices, but are slightly less likely to believe in heaven and hell.

The evangelical population includes 51% Catholics, 31% Protestants, and 5% Jehovah’s Witnesses. Non-evangelicals include 70% Catholics, 10% Jehovah’s Witnesses, and 8% Protestants. Evangelicals indicate that “when you die you will go to Heaven because you have confessed your sins and have accepted Jesus Christ as your savior”. Most non-evangelicals indicate that they do not know what will happen to them after they die at 36% or that they will go to heaven because they are “good people” at 20%.

Evangelicals hold a biblical theology, but are clearly uncertain as to how that translates to daily life; they are likely to believe that God exists (92%) and that heaven and hell are real (77%). Their responses also include evidence that they more strongly believe in forgiveness of sins by faith in Jesus, judgment by God, acceptance of Christ to be forgiven, power of prayer, and the accuracy of the Bible. They are also more likely to recall a specific time when their beliefs changed the way they behaved, not to believe one should bend the rules, and are less likely to accept that lying is moral than their non-evangelical counterparts.

However, some of the evangelicals’ responses are inconsistent with their theological confession; for instance, they are 8% more likely than non-evangelicals to think that the idea of sin is outdated and 51% of them indicate that human souls die with the body just as non-evangelicals do. Also, as noted above, their belief of truth-telling is not compatible with their behavior in that although they believe that lying is wrong, they are more likely to lie. Additionally, although a minority opinion, there are still 25% of evangelical youth respondents who do not think it is important to be a member of a church, accept that all religions teach equally valid truths (31%), and that God is no longer personally involved in the lives of humans (31%).

25% of the respondents practicing a religion attend religious services daily or weekly, while 68% sometimes or rarely attend. Parents also attend infrequently, fathers less frequently than mothers. When compared to non-evangelical responses, evangelical respondents and their families are about 15% more likely to attend religious services. However, overall they feel it is more likely they will attend services as adults with 57% responding that they are somewhat likely or very likely to attend religious services when they graduate or move away from home.

Prayer is the most common religious activity practiced by youth. Reading parts of the Bible is reported by 16% as a weekly or daily practice. 19% or less of the respondents practicing a religious faith attend a religious group, study group, or training either monthly, weekly, or daily. Of those who report they attend religious youth group meetings, 33% attend groups of 30 people or less.

Respondents indicate having heard about the Bible or Jesus at church 84%, family or relatives 83%, and textbooks 78%. The least reported sources to learn about the Bible or Jesus are friends or missionaries. Some aspects of their theological formation are strongly embraced; of the 72% who answered the question relevant to theological perspective, 90% indicate that all the miracles described in the Bible actually took place, 87% indicate that forgiveness of sins is only possible through faith in Jesus Christ, 86% believe Jesus was born to a virgin and He was a real person, 85% believe in angels and their influence on life. Also, 79% indicate that the Bible is accurate in all of its teachings, about 75% believe in the judgment of God and that prayer can change things and 66% believe that those who do not consciously accept Jesus Christ as their savior will be condemned to hell.

Conversely, 81% believe the devil or Satan is not a living being but a symbol of evil and that doing good things in life will earn a person a place in heaven, and 78% indicate the Holy Spirit is a symbol of God’s presence or power but not a living entity. 66% do not believe Jesus Christ returned to life after his death; just over half believe there are some terrible sins that God cannot forgive and that the whole idea of sin is outdated. 30% of the youth report believing in reincarnation.

Approximately 75% of all students responded to the question of whether or not they had made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, with 88% having made such a commitment; this may include First Communion or a

“born-again” personal decision. 60% of the youth made that decision between the ages of 9-15. An additional 35% made the same decision before they were 8 years old.

Female students and older youth are slightly more likely to have made this commitment than males and younger youth. Evangelicals are more likely to have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ than their non-evangelical peers. Most (44%) evangelicals and non-evangelicals (36%) made this decision between the ages of 9-12.

